



THE SOLOMON EPSTEIN COLLECTION

American composer Solomon Epstein (1939-2018) donated the collection of his unpublished music manuscripts to the ICAMus Archive in 2014. Following his death on December 21st, 2018, the Epstein family donated the composer's papers to ICAMus on December 30, 2018. The contents of this second donation are currently (January 2019) being processed and studied.

Dr. Epstein personally compiled this Curriculum Vitae in November-December 2013. At the suggestion of ICAMus Director, Aloma Bardi, he included in the Resume some information on the performance and reception of his opera in Yiddish, The Dybbuk. As a result, this CV is personally narrated by the composer himself.

Along with Solomon Epstein's List of Compositions (Finding Aid for the ICAMus Archive holdings), his Autobiographical Notes and a book chapter by American-music scholar Aloma Bardi on The Dybbuk, this CV is meant as reference for all those interested in the life and work of Solomon Epstein, and in studying, performing, and publishing his compositions internationally.

In remembering and celebrating Dr. Epstein as a unique composer of outstanding originality, a learned man, a synagogue cantor, and a generous music educator, we formulate the objective and the hope that his works be widely known and appreciated.

The Solomon Epstein Collection of music manuscripts and the Epstein Papers are housed at The ICAMus Studio in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. Please direct your inquiries to: "ICAMus" <info@icamus.org>; or contact us through our ICAMus Facebook Page.

SOLOMON EPSTEIN

(1939-2018)

CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford

2001

DMA in Music Composition/Orchestration.

Composition Studies with Robert Carl and Ken Steen.

Private study in Composition/Orchestration with the following professors:

1982-1994 :

Leonardo Balada and Nancy Galbraith, Carnegie-Mellon University;

Andrew Rudin, Philadelphia University of the Arts;

Robert Stern, University of Massachusetts/Amherst.

Yale University School of Music

1970:

Master of Music in Voice and Opera.

Voice Study with Blake Stern.

Some composition study with Yehudi Wyner.

1969: Yale Summer School of Music, Norfolk, Connecticut: Fellowship as one of six singers, including Irene Gubrud, soprano, and Frederica von Stade, mezzo-soprano.

Cantors Institute of Jewish Theological Seminary, New York City

1965:

Bachelor of Sacred Music and Cantor's Diploma.

Honors: Jacobsen Memorial Prize to Outstanding Graduate.

Composition study with Hugo Weisgall and Miriam Gideon.

EMPLOYMENT

1966-2000:

Cantor and Music Director, Synagogues in Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

1980-81:

Interim Director of the Graduate Opera Department at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.

OPERA PERFORMANCE

In May 1999, my opera *The Dybbuk: An Opera In Yiddish* was given a première in Israel at Ben-Gurion University, Beersheba, in honor of the University's formal announcement of a new Chair of Yiddish Studies in the Department of Hebrew Literature.

I had adapted the libretto from the original Yiddish script of the play by S. Ansky (Yiddish playscript courtesy YIVO). I composed the piano-vocal score in 1990-91, and orchestrated the opera in 1991-94.

At the personal invitation of the University Chancellor, Professor Avishai Braverman, people from all over Israel attended.

A second performance at the Susan Dellal Centre for Dance and Theatre, Tel Aviv, attracted a packed audience, which responded to *The Dybbuk* with an ovation. Tel Aviv press reviews were uniformly excellent, as was a review in the London monthly magazine *OPERA*, which ended, «This opera deserves to return to the stage in a full-scale production with orchestra».

The opera was performed by young professional singers of the Israel Vocal Arts Institute, Joan Dornemann, Founder and Director. The stage director, Rachel Michaeli, studied opera directing at IVAI. The conductor was Ronen Borshevsky, who studied at the Tanglewood Conducting Institute, 1996, under Bernard Haitink and Robert Spano.

(The Israel performances were given with my piano-vocal score only, not orchestra. Budget limits meant that only the scenes of the main characters were performed, which was half the opera—70 minutes; performed complete, the opera is 140 minutes.)

The production was supported by the Lerner Foundation for Yiddish Language and Culture, Tel Aviv. The Lerner Foundation also supported the making of a DVD of the Tel Aviv performance. Rachel Michaeli has made the DVD available for

purchase at www.cdbaby.com. The DVD is sung in Yiddish, with English subtitles. The DVD was screened by American institutions as part of annual Yiddish Film Festivals, including the Yiddish Club of the Greater Washington (DC) Jewish community Center; Wesleyan University; and Haverford College.

In 2012, Agi Legutko, Professor of Yiddish in the Jewish Studies Department of the University of Maryland, invited me to speak on the *Dybbuk* opera before a screening of the DVD, as part of her all-day Dybbuk Marathon, which included presentations by Jewish Studies scholars and artists who had made adaptations of *The Dybbuk* in several different performing genres.

In 2011, Professor Giancarlo Lacerenza of Centro di Studi Ebraici, Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", conducted a yearlong study of the Life and Works of S. Ansky with graduate students. Among his assignments were multimedia adaptations (theater, dance, film, music) of S. Ansky's *The Dybbuk*, including the DVD of my opera.

Professor Lacerenza brought the *Dybbuk* opera to the Attention of Professor Aloma Bardi, Founder and Director of ICAMus-The International Center for American Music, affiliated with the University of Florence, where Aloma Bardi at the time was teaching "History of Music in the United States of America". Professor Lacerenza commissioned Professor Bardi to write a new scholarly work on musical adaptations of S. Ansky's play *The Dybbuk*.

The book, *Esotismi musicali del Dibbuk. Ispirazioni da un soggetto del folclore ebraico* [Musical Exoticisms of the Dybbuk: Inspirations from a theme of Jewish folklore], was published in March 2014. It includes analyses of works based on *The Dybbuk* by Aaron Copland, David Tamkin and Leonard Bernstein, and includes a chapter on my opera (pages 162-190 of the volume).

COMPOSING COMMISSIONS

1991: University of Pittsburgh/Johnstown: Incidental Music for Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, presented as part of a Gala Week of Performances for the opening of the University's new Pasquerilla Center for the Performing Arts.

1985: Temple University Graduate Department of Theater: Incidental Music for Lorca's *House of Bernarda Alba*.

1982: University of Pittsburgh/Johnstown Department of Theater: Incidental Music for Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

OTHER FULL-LENGTH OPERAS

2007: *Moby-Dick: Opera-Oratorio in Three Acts*

I adapted the libretto, keeping Melville's text, with the gracious help of Joyce Sparer Adler, President of the Melville Society, a grouping within the Modern language Association, and author of *War in Melville's Imagination* (pub. 1983, New York University Gotham Press).

1999: *Murder In The First: An American Opera in Two Acts*

I adapted the libretto from the novel and stage play by permission of their author, Dan Gordon, who was screenwriter for the 1995 Warner Bros. film of the same title. This opera served as my dissertation for the DMA at the Hartt School of Music. I revised the opera extensively in 2002.

ONE-ACT OPERAS

1988: *Water Songs: Monodrama for soprano and chamber ensemble*. Setting of a play by Gabriel Lanci, a winner in the 1994 International Alexander Onassis Playwriting Competition.

1986: *The Wild Boy*. Libretto by the composer. Based on events surrounding the efforts by Dr. Jean-Marc Itard (1800-1805) to civilize the feral child known as Victor of Aveyron. Partial performance by the Orchestra of the Philadelphia University of the Arts.

1985: *Model: On Oedipus*.

